

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Dr. T. A. Larson, Professor Emeritus, History
Department, University of Wyoming

DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 20, 1992

PLACE: Living Room of Larson Home at 810 Clark, Laramie,
WY

INTERVIEWER: Mark Junge

TRANSCRIPTION BY: Kathy A. Rooney

DATE OF TRANSCRIPTION: April , 1994

PLACE: 6905 Poulos Drive
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

MJ: You know about this project, what we're doing.

TA: Well roughly, you're interviewing how many people - 100?

MJ: No it'll probably wind up to - so far I've done close to 300. But all those people won't be in the book. We'll have to cut some of them out. But there's a certain select few that I already know about that will go in the book. The others - sometimes you do an interview because somebody says you should interview so-and-so. So you do. Then you get a bright idea and you think you should interview somebody else - and you do. So pretty soon these things start stacking up, but out of those 300 I've got some already in my mind that I know will go in the book. Because the picture's good and the quotes are good. But essentially what it's going to be is a picture and a little quote underneath. Maybe a paragraph and sometimes maybe even a page, but not much more than that. Cause it's mainly a pictorial book for your coffee table. But I think it's going to be more than that, the project is sort of twofold. We're going to have the best of the interviews and the best excerpts from those interviews along with the best pictures for the book, but down the road I think all these tapes that I've done and

I've done about 500 tapes on 350 people, I think that's going to be the most important part of this archives.

TA: Going into the archives, in the historical collections over there.

MJ: Yeah and nobody's done the black and white pictures with the interviews and nobody's done the slides with the interviews. So we've attacked this from several angles. Anyway, that's pretty much what I'm up to so, gee whiz, don't be afraid to say anything - I know you never are, but if I use anything it'll probably be just like I did with the last book. The pictorial history when we had a picture of you and then a quote.

MJ: OK Dr. Larson, here's what I thought I'd go through with you today to see if you agree - I mean to see if you agree with this outline. I have a bit of an introduction here, then I'd like to talk a little bit about Wyoming in general, in real general terms. A little bit about the future of Wyoming. Then maybe talk a little bit about your writing and future of Wyoming history. Then a few other minor things, but that's pretty much it. What do you think?

TA: Anything you want.

MJ: OK. Alright. Today is the 20th of January, 1992 and my name is Mark Junge and I'm talking with my mentor Dr. T.A. Larson, Taft Alfred Larson, here in his home at 810 Clark in the Living Room in Laramie, Wyoming. Dr. Larson and I are going to talk a little bit today - this fine winter day - about Wyoming, about Wyoming history and about the future of both. So Dr. Larson, just to start out with, today is Martin Luther King day. Do you have any reflections on that at all?

TA: Well I think it's an appropriate day. Certainly Martin Luther King has made a great mark in American History.

MJ: How do you feel about Wyoming and Martin Luther King. I mean it was a little bit tough to get that holiday through wasn't it? It took a little while.

TA: Took a little while yes. Mrs. Byrd worked, I heard her say every day 12, 13 years on that - I was in the Legislature when we passed it and I was for it at the time. I do think that we're having too many days and that there's a limit to when you can close schools and offices for, so that the time is coming when you have to combine them the way they've done with Veterans, etc. Instead of having special day - and same way they combined Washington and Lincoln. I don't think that was very appropriate, but we have it that way and somewhere I think they've dropped Columbus day in order to find room for Martin Luther King, and so on. So I don't know that you need to close everything for each new thing that comes along like that.

MJ: Sometimes the schools get off and sometimes they don't

TA: That's right - I just heard over the television today that only 13% of the corporations in the country are closing today. That's the lowest percentage of closings for any holiday of this type. So there isn't the enthusiasm for it. I think the day is coming within the next 30 years probably when the WASPS the White Anglo Saxon Protestants will not outnumber the other people in this nation of ours and people who've been discriminating against the nonwhite people are going to be in the position where they might very well be discriminated against themselves.

MJ: Yes I understand. Did you watch the 5 Democratic candidates for President last night?

TA: I missed that.

MJ: We one of them, I think it was Jerry Brown from California, said that half of the population that's being born today, 1 out of 2, are hispanic.

TA: It's incredible what's happened to all of Florida and Southern California. It's almost unbelievable the problems that have taken place out there that's a result of the great influx and I don't know whether the United States is going to continue to have open immigration. Of course we still shut out some people, send them back to Haiti and so on. But at the rate that the Hispanics are flooding in and the Asians are flooding in, and the Blacks are increasing in population in this country and so on, unless there is some unforeseen change in the policy the WASPS will not be running this country.

MJ: You remember Daniel Johnson that White Supremacist who ran for political office here a couple of years ago - maybe a year ago. He's living up in Wheatland now. I read over one of his brochures and he expressed the fear that the United States was becoming a non-white country and he suggested that we better do something about it quick. That we'd better allow only those people who can prove that they have at least 1/8th blood from Northwest Europe.

TA: Yes, well I'm afraid the whole world is - already the whites are in the minority certainly or have been forever, but they're not going to dominate the world the way they've been accustomed to doing and it's unfortunate that so many whites have been discriminating, have looked down at ethnic and racial and religious minorities, because the 'chickens have come home to roost'. We are changing, but it's been very slow and there's still a lot of racism in this country.

MJ: Why has Wyoming been excluded from the racism problem so much, or have we?

TA: Because there have been so few blacks in this country - in Wyoming. There're only what 2500 now or so. And only 7 or 8 thousand Indians. We have 98% or

99% are white in Wyoming, so that it's they said in the Navy in World War II, there's been a lot of change since then, the Navy could tolerate blacks, very few, but they couldn't tolerate very many of them, so they would use them aboard ship as a small number of cooks and bakers and so on. For a short time I was commanding officer of black cook and bakers school at the Great Lakes Naval Training center among my various duties. I got along very well with them, because I had the brightest, ablest yeoman and petty officer you ever saw and they just told me what to do and I did it. I always got along pretty well with few blacks I've known. Back in 1940 I took a visiting black professor down to the Connor Hotel here and we were not served so we had to walk out there. And at Great Lakes I felt sorry for these petty officers I had on pay day because they had to go to a great deal of trouble, catch buses and so on, to get over to the main side at Great Lakes in order to pick up their pay. So I loaded them in my car and took them across. Now other officers who saw me doing that they probably reported it, because that was certainly not the way the Navy wanted it done. You were not supposed to associate that way socially, you were not supposed to deal with the non-officers in the first place - and blacks in particular.

(11.07, Tape 1, Side A)

MJ: Did you every receive any flack for that?

TA: I didn't - if I'd continued in that position, but the commanding officer, the training school command there, brought me over as his, he moved me over to his office and made me the assistant to the executive officer of his operation, so I was sort of a trouble shooter and so on. And then later on, the last six months I wrote a history of the Great Lakes Naval Training center in preparation for the administrative histories that they published. But no, I knew I was sticking my neck out, but thought that was the thing to do.

MJ: Well, do you think that Wyoming is any less or any more racist than any state in the Union?

TA: No I don't think so, I think it's about the same. There's a good deal of movement of people back and forth and so on and the only reason that some people think that we're not a racist is that there are so few of them here. And the problems are different when you have just a very few. I know in my little home town in northeast Nebraska when I grew up, we had one black boy and I don't know where his relatives where. He was the only one in town. And there was one Jew. And so they were sort of oddities and conversation pieces. We didn't discriminate against them particularly, but certainly we didn't consider them our equals.

MJ: You have somewhat of a liberal attitude towards race and other subjects like that.

TA: We I learned that very quickly when I went to Boulder. I had a very quite liberal mentor there, professor that I admired very much, and he helped shape my attitude

MJ: What was his name?

TA: E. F. Meyer, Erwin F. Meyer was his name. He died of cancer at the age of 33, so I knew him only for a couple of years. He died while I was still - during my first year of graduate work he died.

MJ: Well what about your background now. You came from a small community as you said, Wakefield, Nebraska. You would probably as you said not have had much contact with liberal ideas. Why, what's your predisposition, do you think?

TA: Well I'm sort of a humanist and I certainly accept the idea that all people are created equal and that color should not be the base of discrimination against anybody. I don't know where I picked that idea up, maybe I learned it in high school even, I think most teachers sort of pushed that idea that we should judge people by their own individual character not by the color of their skin.

MJ: But what I'm talking about is the sense of fairness. Does that come out of your family? Your father, your mother?

TA: Not particularly. They were both immigrants, Swedish immigrants, with very little formal education, what you might call eighth grade education in Sweden. They were hardworking people. Strongly motivated by work ethic. Great believers in education because they had so little of it and they saw that you have to have it if you're going to get on in this world, or it's a big help. So what they did inculcate in us certainly was that you've gotta plan on getting all the education you can and you've got to try to be the best in anything you undertake. So that was driven into us early on. My mother died when I was only 8 years old, so she didn't have much influence on me, but my father continued that attitude, that you've got to be prepared, work hard, but I don't think we every discussed equality of races or anything like that.

MJ: What about equality of sexes? Because I sense in the work that you've done, both in National Organization for Women and with you're history _____ you're history of the Women Suffrage Movement. I sense in there that there is more than just a passing interest in this field. That there's something in your upbringing that allowed you to be empathetic to women.

TA: Well I'm not sure when I developed that. It could be as an undergraduate, but my interest in the history of the Womens Rights Movement came here at the University of Wyoming. Because early on I ran into a couple of the myths propagated by Grace _____ Hebert - two of them. I didn't have to study very much to discover that she was wrong on the Esther Morris story and that she

was wrong about Sacajewea. Calling Esther Morris the mother of women suffrage and so on, ignored all the history of the women's rights movement in this country. When you look at the facts of the matter, it's just absurd and when you build up Sacajewea the way she did and bundled a good many falsehoods into that and when you look into the history of that - so that I got in Esther Morris and secondarily or in consequence interested in the women's rights movement. Why then did Wyoming lead in the women's rights movement, who was responsible? How did that fit in with the rest of the country? This is one of Wyoming's chief distinctions, as I point out called the Equality State and so on, we adopted that nickname early. It is an outstanding distinction that we have there, it sets up apart from other states. So that my curiosity was peaked as you say and I had to find out why. Why we adopted it. Then I had to find out why Colorado, right next door and Utah and Idaho why this block of four states, were we responsible for their adopting womans suffrage or what persuaded them. And one thing lead to another til that became an absorbing interest on my part, so I had to pursue that. I did, I spent years developing my ideas about that. But early on I accepted the arguments of the great leaders of the womens right movement in the East. And I discovered that the justice of it was there, but you couldn't sell it to the men of that period on the just argument along, you had to combine it with more practical considerations like it would attract population or it would do this or that you know. A small number of men would go along with the women and the men at that famous Womens Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, NY in 1849, I think there were about 60 women and 40 men there. There were quite a few men involved in it. So men got involved in it early too.

MJ: Do you think I you would have been alive at that time, you would have been involved in that?

TA: It's hard to say, it's hard to say. I think I would have got into the anti-slavery thing and most of the women and men too who were the early leaders in the East in the womens rights movement, they had been previously in the anti-slavery movement. They moved from that into that, because they were somewhat racist, many of them, and they said well goodness if we're going to give blacks the right to vote, these people with no education, what about the women who want their right? There was some problem there for the anti-slavery people who got cross-wise with some of the privileges being granted, or rights being granted to black men and black women, less so the black women because they were being left out and they were hesitant to concentrate on doing right for the blacks and forgetting themselves.

(20.52, Tape 1, Side A)

MJ: Well in other words if you're going to be a progressive, you might as well have a consistent stance?

TA: Well (laughter) yes the two fit together. But the women had plenty of grievances. Actually the women first back there, Susan B. Anthony and her associates, some of them, what they fought first was the equality in handling money, rather than the right to vote. That came later on back when they discovered that they're not going to have any control of the finance or influence there unless they get an education and unless they eventually get the right to vote. But so many of them had been pushed around by patriarchal (sp??) husbands and so on and given an allowance to do this and that - they wanted to have a little more control of the family budgets and so on. That was the principal reason they got off in that direction - one thing leads to another and these things gradually gel.

MJ: I'm still curious though as to why you should be such a "Democrat" and not just politically speaking - such a democrat in your outlook. You would have been an abolitionist maybe rabid, but you would have been anti slavery.

TA: I cast my first vote in 1932 when I was in Boulder after I had been influenced by this mentor of mine down there. But also because I was influenced by Franklin D. Roosevelt. My father was a Republican, that was a very Republican community - scarcely any Democrats in my home town. The tariff in those days, before that the Republican high tariff and so agriculture people generally saw their economic interest in having tariffs. Democrats in that period and earlier had been more inclined toward trade - low tariffs and so on. This has changed in modern times, but at any rate you may remember that Franklin D., I mean Herbert Hoover won by the biggest margin that any presidential candidate had won by in 1928 - and in 1932 he lost by the biggest margin. The changes the great depression really caused a lot questioning about the capitalistic system even. A number of people went all the way to communism in that period. Some very wise sensible people went to socialism. Norman Thomas was one - he influenced me to some extent. I heard him speak in Denver one time. A VERY brilliant lecturer about the rights of man and so on. It was not a lot of young men and women who had been brought up - men in particular been brought up - as Republicans and normally would have followed their parents in the Republican party - switched in 1932 and quite a few older Republicans switched too.

MJ: Were you a Republican before that?

TA: Well I hadn't even voted before you see, so I wasn't even registered to vote. As I say it was the first chance I had, I was 21 years old in 1932.

MJ: Did you and your dad have arguments on political issues at all?

TA: No I don't remember that we did.

MJ: Because I know that's one reason why I'm a Democrat today, is because I've gone head on with my father on almost every single issue you could imagine.

TA: Well I might have if I'd been - but you see I really didn't become a Democrat, in fact in the 20's I admired Hoover quite a bit. The studies we had in history as an undergraduate in high school we read about various political leaders and so on and I think probably my inclinations were in the Republican direction. Everybody else in town, we used to recite about "fried rats and pickled cats are good enough for the Democrats" that was a common expression around my home town during election campaigns and so on.

MJ: (laughter) Well OK I'm interested in knowing where these things come from, because someday I think that historians are going to pick you apart just like they pick everything else apart. They're going to say well "Where did Dr. Larson get these sort of antiestablishment Democratic ideas? Where did these ideas come from?" I hope to be able to ferret out some of those things because I sometimes think - and I appreciate what you're telling me about your education and about the Depression and what you thought and your influences like Mr. Meyer and I suppose Laura White influenced you and strong competent women might have influenced you but I'm also interested in your youth. Here you were raised in Wakefield, Nebraska where you might ordinarily be considered to be a hard nosed Republican. Like you said in those days the Republicans were for the tariffs - it's the other way around - so it's kind of interesting to me that you should turn out to be a Democrat. Especially with your father a Republican and your mother dying early.

TA: Well 1932 counts for that I think more than anything else. Plus the situation there in Boulder.

MJ: OK Now in this introduction to this book, you're Wyoming book, the bicentennial history book that you published in 1977. In reading the invitation to the reader by the general editor, James Morton Smith, he talks about the authors in this whole series of books done in this bicentennial series. He says "They have in common only these things. Historical knowledge, writing skill and strong personal feelings about a particular state." I assume then, if you can believe what he says, is the reason he picked you or you were picked as the writer from Wyoming or who would write about Wyoming was because you did have strong personal feelings about Wyoming. Is that true? Do you have strong personal feelings about the state?

TA: Oh yes, yes, yes. I learned to love Wyoming early on in fact. My first dedication to Wyoming came while I was at Boulder. I spent four summers in Yellowstone Park 1931, 32, 33, and 34 and I mixed up Yellowstone Park and Jackson Hole with Wyoming because during those four years at least, that's the part of Wyoming I knew but noone could associate with those two areas as much as I did in that period without developing a great affection for some aspects of Wyoming. The wildlife and the fishing and the mountains and the Grand Teton Range and the park life up there and all that. That caused me to set Wyoming apart more than anything else. The rest of Wyoming I didn't know very much

about because I'd spend my winters in Boulder then the first of the year I went on the train up there after that. One year Korean chap and I bought a, that was in 1932 I guess, we bought a 1922 Chrysler sedan for \$25 - can you believe that? This was of course during the Depression. Didn't have very good tires and it burned a quart of oil for every 50 miles and so on (laughter) but it got us up there and back. But at any rate I would ride up with somebody. First year was the train later on drive up there and back. So I didn't see much of Wyoming. We would just go out west along Interstate - wasn't interstate then, Lincoln Highway - out to Lander or Rock Springs and go up that way. No, I got sort of a false picture of Wyoming, which influenced my whole attitude towards Wyoming.

MJ: What did you do up there?

TA: Well, first year I was hired as a yard man. I was supposed to clean up the yard around the cafeteria at Old Faithful. Then they moved me into being a scrubber in the housekeeping cabins. They had cheap cabins with tent tops over them. We would put then tent top in the Spring - we'd nail the tents and pull then tents over the frame. Then we'd clean out the cabins, spread a little lye around where they fried fish over the little tin can stove and scrub them out, put some water in and wash them out. Provide some kindling for them and a little of the dope, we'd mix up a little kerosene and sawdust and leave them a little can that they could use to start their fire. And then two summers I was the night watchman, then they moved me to Mammoth and I was the night watchman there and worked for a while as a scrubber in the housekeeping camps and then two summers I was the night watchman at the _____ lodge. I don't know if you're familiar with that. It's a small lodge between Canyon and Mammoth. So I got around quite a bit that way.

MJ: How did you get those jobs?

TA: Well I guess maybe there was a recruiter. There must have been someone somewhere that I learned that there were jobs in Yellowstone. It might have been from a fraternity brother down there. He became a - maybe he came back - he was a ranger up there. But at any rate, somewhere I learned that there was an opportunity for summer jobs. I applied, I got it and once I was up there I was able to continue for 4 summers.

MJ: And that was your first contact with Wyoming?

TA: That's right. Well not quite. In 1929 when I was a sophomore at Boulder, several of us drove up to Laramie and out on the Lincoln Highway to Utah to follow the football team. We had a great football team - we thought! We wanted to cheer them on and so we took a weekend off to drive out there. Had 9 flat tires along this incredible gravel road! This was all gravel in those days, they were just starting to oil the roads - had gravel roads. So we had to stop and patch tires, I don't know.

MJ: The game was in Laramie?

TA: No the game was in Salt Lake City. A game between the University of Colorado and Utah. Yeah, Wyoming was not in the conference with Colorado at that time.

MJ: And you had 9 flat tires?

(34.10, Tape 1, Side A)

TA: Believe it or not, flat tires. And we could patch them pretty fast. Well it no doubt added a couple of hours to trip, but we certainly had to go on Friday. We skipped school on Friday and drove out there all day Friday. I guess we got there Friday night or

MJ: Or early Saturday morning?

TA: Well I think we all piled in a room in Hotel Utah and shared a room that way, the five of us, were in one room, I don't remember. But at any rate we drove up and coming back we came back through Colorado over the mountains. For some reason we didn't have any flats coming back, I don't understand that

MJ: Who won the game?

TA: Utah beat us 40 to nothing! It was just - so it was a long way home, I'll tell you that.

MJ: (laughter) OK So that was your first contact with Wyoming. Well I would say your first contact probably gave you a truer sense of what Wyoming was about than your summers up in the northwest corner of the state.

TA: Well nevertheless it gave me a prejudice in favor of - a bias in favor of Wyoming. That beautiful country, that kind of life, the wildlife elsewhere and fishing opportunities and things like that. Then I came in '36 and got a one year job substituting for one of the people here and that's when I really got acquainted with Wyoming, that year. Then I went to England for a year then came back and learned more and more about Wyoming. I came training in medieval history and english history and not knowing anything about Wyoming - I had to learn that from scratch. They took me back after the year in England only on the condition that I would work up a course in Wyoming history because Hebert had that all to herself and she had died when I was here the first year and they hadn't replaced her yet and they wanted someone to keep that Wyoming history going. Then I gradually took over. Most of what I knew about Wyoming I learned after I came to the campus here at the University.

MJ: In all those years of study and I assume are still learning.

TA: Well yes, afraid so. (laughter)

MJ: What do you think, and I know it's in this book and I know it's in your other book, what do you think in a nutshell is the story of Wyoming Dr. Larson? I think you start out by saying altitude and aridity have something to do with it at base (??) Is that right?

TA: That's right. We've always been, even to the present day, the least industrialized state. Have fewer people employed in manufacturing than any other state. It's always been sparsely settled and probably will continue to be sparsely settled because of the _____ soil was the dominant thing you had to have, soil was the important thing. Agriculture caused the development that flooded people into Montana, flooded people into Colorado and into the Dakotas. They came late to Wyoming because it wasn't as attractive. The fact that we didn't have any precious metals, that held us back - they found gold in the '70's of course in South Dakota, they found it in the early '60's in Montana, in the early '60's in Idaho, in Utah they found some gold and silver and copper and so on, in Colorado - all around Wyoming. God knows people poured an awful lot of sweat over the mountains of Wyoming looking for gold, but except for a couple of summers there in South Pass, there was really no rush into Wyoming like these other states had. That held us back, we didn't get that start. Once you get mining to an extent well then you've got supporting merchants and other things that fit in with mining and some of those old metals are processed and so on. And oil, well we found that early, markets were unavailable so that until World War I that didn't develop, there was some development then and then it lapsed afterwards because Texas and Oklahoma and Louisiana, Illinois, those places they could supply all the oil the place needed. It was just too far from markets, we didn't have the raw materials that were in great demand at that time. Our agriculture, which did attract a lot of people at lower altitudes they found - well as somebody said in the 1920's "it takes three people to make a success of an irrigated farm let alone a dryland farm!" Most of the homesteaders failed, same way with the irrigated farmers. The first two would sink their capital - would put something into it the third would come along and by that time the federal would cut the price of irrigation water and so on, so that the third had a chance to _____. The circumstances were just not favorable for rapid population growth in Wyoming.

MJ: We've always had the tag of being a colonial state though - right?

TA: Well that's true because raw materials just goes back to mercantilism in the 18th century where advanced states felt they had to have colonies where they could get raw materials and they could unload some of their manufacturing stuff. Treat them as colonies. We've been treated as a colony pretty much although that's an argument now about whether we're colonial now or not, but basically there's no question that we have been dominated more than most states by outside forces.

Partly because of our small population. We are last in population of course. A few years ago, 15 or 20 years ago, we were ahead of Nevada and Alaska, but that's no longer true. We are to the present day and we're going to be for the foreseeable future dominated by international developments, by national developments, by big corporations doing things when the recession comes along or depression or whatever you want to call it, the corporations cut down their activities. What did they do, they pulled people out of Casper, they put them Denver and some way for a lot of other agencies. The government even pulls people out of here and concentrates them. It's been true for Wyoming and it'll continue to be true that we're going to be dominated by outside. Wars have influenced us more than anything else. The ups and downs alone. This past century's been a century of great wars, World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Korean war and even this Gulf War - all of them have had great influence on Wyoming.

(42.58 Tape 1, Side A)

- MJ: As you mentioned in your book, the fur trappers came here, got their furs that industry dried up so there was no more industry. Immigrants came through on the trails, passing through here - they didn't want anything - they just came through.
- TA: They got something of a false impression because in the years of the greatest rush at least the grass was eaten off for 10 miles around and they just didn't see the prospect of making a living here and they'd heard about the possibilities of farther west and they had an exaggerated notion of what they were going to find on the west coast. So they started out with no intention of stopping in Wyoming and they saw very little in Wyoming to persuade them to stay.
- MJ: The cattleman saw the opportunity in the grass, they in effect exported the grass through cattle.
- TA: The cattle industry is not one that wants a lot of people around - people and cattle don't mix some of the cattlemen say - so that's not an industry that will attract people or a very large number of settlers.
- MJ: The oil industry and coal industry both extract things from the ground. I guess my point is that the furtrappers, the cattleman, the oil and the coal producer all extracted things from Wyoming somehow or another. I'm wondering if you see an end to that somewhere down the road. Will we always be a state that people take things out of?
- TA: Well, it's hard to predict. One thing we do know almost certainly is that there are going to be great changes and many of them you cannot predict. If we look at the things that happened in this past century, more industrialization, more new ideas, more things happen, more productivity, tremendous improvements in

health and medical care, scientific development, technological, more of these things happened in that one century - this century we're still in than in all previous history. It's just incredible.

(Beginning of Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: Well I certainly agree with that. It's some thought that didn't come through your book, but I can understand exactly what you're saying there.

TA: These things have really developed elsewhere practically all of them and we were affected by that but think in the changes in communication and manufacturing and ways of making a living - agriculture. When I was born and grew up the assumption was I was going to be a farmer, most people became farmers in that period. Now maybe 30% of the people in the country live on farm and ranches - at that time most of the people did. Tremendous change. All the development in agriculture made that possible. The hybrid corn and all the other scientific development. But the changes in manufacturing, the new inventions, the television, the radio and the development of petrochemicals, the automobile, the airplane, the television, the radio and all sorts of gadgets like the zipper, the velcro, ballpoint pen.

MJ: Incidentally I think that was invented by a Swedish person - velcro

TA: Well one invention leads to another, you know. The change in education, how relatively few people went to college when I was a boy. The medical changes - the lengthened life of people, the medical wonders, it's just incredible. Communication, they talk about the information, we've got 100 times the information gathered all over the world stacked up far more than anybody can hope, there used to be universal men back in the 16th century who could _____ about all knowledge there was or at least have some conception about it. Now, can't hope to learn enough about one particular specialty and yet know we're reaching the point again where we're turning toward more of the interdisciplinary instead of one thing. The computer and various offshoots, space travel - who would think we would send someone to the moon when I was a boy. There might have been some futurist who said sometime we would get to the moon or something like that. When you project that into the next century anyone who tries to speculate about what we're going to see - we can accept as a fact that there's going to be tremendous changes. Not all of them for the good. There are a lot of things that happened too - I just talked about some of the things that you might regard as progress. But some things that have come along since I was a boy that most of us probably have lost our confidence in progress and the idea of progress. Perfectibility and that sort of thing. Things are getting better and better. Lot of this is not only because of the current recession, called depression if you will, but because of what's happened to the family and morality and crime and all these things. The AIDS business and who would have thought even when I went to college and came to the University of Wyoming we'd have co-ed

dormitories, putting them on the same floor and quite a few students living here on the campus living here without the benefit of marriage and so on. Much more sexual freedom.

MJ: Do you think that's bad or good?

TA: Well I think the consequences are bad! Most of the consequences are bad in some ways. It's apparently inevitable, I don't even know there's much point to even deplore it. No I think there's a lot to be said for family life. This is destructive. Half the people that get married - get divorced. A lot of people, their futures are wrecked by premarital sex or by young men become fathers and have to drop out of school to take care of the child and single mothers. This single mothers business is not good. No, I think postponing sex is a better way to handle it - was a better way to handle it.

MJ: I don't mean to be critical here, but don't you think though as a person gets older he tends to feel throughout history that there's a breakdown in morality. Didn't the Romans used to feel that?

TA: Well it's true. I used to apologize whenever I start getting pessimistic about, I would say people of my age are apt say things have gone to the dogs and they said it I suppose, some of the older people did, when I was a boy. But a lot of things have happened since then. Family for example held together better in those days. There was more family life, on the farms the family worked together for example. There wasn't the opportunity, more people are living in cities now. Youngsters running around at nights and so on there wasn't so much of that. You were out on the farm your kids were all working and so on. They went to bed early so they weren't introduced to a lot of these temptations.

MJ: One of these candidates last night on TV, I don't know if it was - let's see there was Jerry Brown, Tom Harkin, Paul Tsongas, Governor Carey, and finally Clinton from Arkansas - one of them said something about how technology, interestingly enough, technology the fact that some of these people believe that there ought to be computers in every home, that we ought to have more educational channels, this person felt that technology was going to bring the family back together in the living room.

TA: No I think everything is tended the other way. This business of having to have - not so long ago one person except in the agriculture in the earlier period everybody pitched in and worked on a farm, but in the middle years of this century at any rate and certainly since that time we've reached the point in our economic development and political development that you have to have more than one moneymaker in the family so that all the women have to go to work. Most of the women are working now and generally don't get much pay and there's a lot of minimum wage stuff and this brings tension in the family's and so on. There are a lot of latchkey kids as they say that are on the loose after school

and so on they're not getting the family assistance that they need and direction. No I think conditions are worse in that respect than they have been in the past. I'll grant you that in every generation since earliest time, I don't doubt that some of elders didn't like some of the changes that did come in, but change has come on so fast particularly on this family life. The questions of morality and sex freedom and all that.

(10.12, Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: When you chronicle the history of women in the womens movement don't see that some of those things, working outside the home, needing daycare, needing some of these things - that you probably as a progressive Democrat would support in any case I assume? Don't you see that those things are inevitable?

TA: Well - no - the women they wanted to have influence in politics and the vote and so on and they wanted the opportunity to work outside the home for those that were so disposed so that some of them did get into economic activity and so on. But they were concerned more about protecting the single woman and their opportunities. When I was a boy we had our old maids around and it was a woman who didn't get married by the time she was 25 people thought she was in awful position and in a sense she was. She was certainly discriminated against, and looked down upon and so on and I think that's one of the big improvements we've had the opportunity for single women to remain single if they want to.

MJ: What you're saying you would like to see maintained the family unit - the traditional family unit.

TA: That's right

MJ: OK You just said a mouthful a little while ago when you compressed all the developments, not all but a lot of the technological developments that took place in this last century - you compressed them like a good historian would. I found it interesting in the book here that was written in 1977 - so you have to understand that before you can make a comment about this - but I'm going to make a comment and that is you said "Teno Roncalio estimated 500,000 people by 1985" I think was the figure and I think was the date. Then you said "Herschler on the other hand estimated 750,000". You felt constrained to agree with Teno Roncalio the more conservative figure and of course we never reached that or if we did, we didn't know about it because the census sure showed that we didn't reach that. And here it is 1992 and we've dropped back down to - what is it now 460,000?

TA: I think its 453,000 isn't it? Probably 449,000 actually because there was an argument about not counting estimating. In the past they've given credit for estimates. But no we did exceed 500,000 in the mid 80's. What happened was because of that big boom period with the oil going up to \$40 a barrel and all that

and everybody rushing in here and thinking that things are going to continue that way and every community in the state was overfilled. We got well over 500,000 I think in the mid 80's. Then there was a big drop after that then at the end of the century we found ourselves down to 473,000 - then we were below. We did actually exceed 500,000. But people thought then that it was going to continue, that this boom wasn't going to be the bust that occurred in so many places in the country - including Wyoming.

MJ: Right and with that dash of cold water or that dash of realism, I'm wondering what you think this state's going to look like 100 years from now?

TA: Well I think we're not going to be a heavily populated place. I would hope we value what assets we have, our unique aspects, that we put a high enough premium on our wildlife, our mountain scenery, our wide open spaces, our parks, our trails, our historic forts and things like that and our mountains and what water we have, that we will treasure them and preserve them and give some opportunities for a limited number of people to enjoy them. Because the way things are going, most of the country's going to be so crowded that they're going to relish an opportunity to see something like that. Our problem however, on the other hand is that this tourism is sort of a fragile thing. It can be overdone very easily and we can't stand too many people without losing it. I'm reminded of the dog that stood on the bridge with a bone in his mouth and looks in the water and sees his shadow and drops the bone grabbing for the other. You know you push this tourism too hard, too fast, it's not a perfect economic development in some respects. For one thing it's so seasonal and in the second place there's so many poorly paid jobs in the tourism business, you can't build a first rate society on a lot of minimum wage jobs.

MJ: Nevertheless a lot of boomers and mainstreeters are going to be attacking you and saying

TA: Sure I think they will be. But there a lot of people who live in Wyoming and who have lived in Wyoming, who stay here when they may have opportunities to go elsewhere - they like it the way it is. They think Wyoming is a delightful, uncrowded Commonwealth so to speak. No there's bound to be that conflict between the boosters and the knockers. There've got to be some people to keep the boomers honest on these things because they want to bring in things that are not going to be worthwhile in the longrun. They want to make a quick buck and make their money and get out probably. Many of them are of that inclination and so on. I foresee an opportunity for a limited number of people to have a good life in Wyoming, but there is a ceiling, there is a ceiling on that. Even if we wind up being the only place in the country that has these wide open spaces, we can't accommodate millions of people.

MJ: I sometimes wonder, if as you say, we grow to the proportion that you think that we will grow to, if Wyoming won't be one of the last refuges where a person can get a breath of fresh air and see a wide expanse with nothing else in it.

TA: That's an opportunity. Whether we can really capitalize on that opportunity is problematic. No, that's something to be sought after - figure out some way to do it. Now we see Yellowstone too crowded in the summertime, too crowded. Every place you go up there the highways are jammed and they talk about monorails and so on. It might be possible to build another circle highway around closer to the outside of the park, taking in the parts that haven't been opened yet, that has been mentioned as a possibility, but the monorail is another possibility and so on. It has been a great place up til the last few years, and as I say when you go up there and see the people jammed around everywhere, why then you begin to wonder whether we haven't gone about as far as we can.

MJ: Do you have confidence in a Wyoming citizen to understand what you are saying and maybe inherently understands?

TA: Well I think a lot of Wyoming people feel the way I do about this. We have the Powder River Basin people. We have the Sierra Club. We have the Wyoming Outdoor Council. We have various preservation groups and so on and they're getting more and more influential. People who want to maintain our wilderness, people who are interested in buying this ranch from Gerry Spence and Moriarity and want to save that. I think it's a good movement into starting charge fees for going into these parks. They're adding 5 more now this year for the Fish and Game charging, because we can't provide very good facilities. We ought to have better facilities than we have in our park places and so on. We ought to try to figure out some way to solve this problem of what people in southeastern Wyoming call the 'greenies'. We shouldn't just be an overplayed recreation place for Colorado to come up here with their trailers - not spending their money here really - fill up gasoline in Colorado and their groceries and come up here and enjoy their recreation in the Medicine Bow Range and so on. Because we're not getting, if we're going to have a decent society in Wyoming, we can't have it by having that kind of tourism. We've got to manage that some way and I don't know what the solution is for that.

MJ: You make some predictions here in this book. You say (this is page 183 in the epilogue) "Wyoming still has its dreams not only in the past but in the future and these hopes and visions are threatened by forces not always in control by the people of Wyoming" One of your predictions "For those who had no neighbors will not see many new faces" So you think that the population is going to increase, is that what that means?

TA: Well, this was at the beginning of the boom thing you see and it got worse in the early years of the 80's. We could foresee that because there were at that time many predictions, some of them extreme, about all the things that were going to

happen. Because with the apparent shortage of fuel and the price of oil going up to \$40 and so on, that put such a value on our coal and oil and natural gas, that we were going to have some people predict that we were going to have a dozen gasification and liquifaction plants. If we were going to have all these plants and the possibility of some of them at any rate, that we were going to see new faces.

(23.03, Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: That explains. Cause you say in the land noone wanted for centuries is covered by hosts of outsiders.

TA: Well we were at that time. The way things worked out and the Arabs, the Saudis and so on the way they dropped the price of oil, they pulled the plug on a lot of that. We were partly responsible for the way we dealt with the boom part of it, we were partly to blame. The Reagan administration partly to blame for _____ in that period, if we could have regulated a little better, could have had a little more influence in the pricing system and not the OPEC the all producing oil exporting countries. If we could have been more effective in dealing with them maybe had a wiser energy policy, maybe had a \$10 a barrel import duty or something, we might have been able to avoid that great boom that we had which was destructive. Very destructive and the consequences.

MJ: So this boom and bust we all talk about in Wyoming is not inevitable?

TA: No it isn't. In fact we've had small booms and busts in the past - this was the worst one we've ever had. Casper had locally some booms and busts, but statewide this was certainly the biggest boom and bust situation we've ever had. We've had more bad years than good and the boom has been very rare in Wyoming.

MJ: Then page 183 is explained for me. What do you think - do you think we'll have a woman Governor? What about the future?

TA: Well I think I won't be quoted on this before the coming election. I think we could very well have one this year.

MJ: You do?

TA: I have a suspicion that Mike Sullivan is going to run for U.S. Senate and we'll replace Wallop and Kathy Karpan will run for Governor and win. That's my prediction. And she'll make a good one.

MJ: Why do you think so?

TA: She's a lawyer for one thing, that always helps. That helped broaden her experience. She's had several years experience in Washington. She's become

a very articulate capable public speaker. She's done a lot as the Secretary of State. She's speaking all over the state to business groups and so on pointing out what she's doing to help business in the state. I think she has run a very fine shop as far as taking care of business in Wyoming.

MJ: So would you also say then that Wyoming is now in terms of its history ready for a - finally ready for another governor?

TA: I think we are. Mrs. Thompson, she wanted to run two or three time but with her children to consider she never could quite get up the courage to run. She probably would have got beat. I think we're getting a little more galatariar (??) in that respect. I think women are getting more influential in the state and we're breaking down discrimination against women.

MJ: What about the cattlemen? We still have a lot of cattlemen?

TA: No we don't have a lot of cattlemen. Not more than 1 in 12 lives on farm and ranch of the people in Wyoming today.

MJ: Isn't their influence

TA: Well they - in some political things they see eye to eye with low taxes and so on with many of the business people in town. One reason why, we've had our great influence of ranchers in the Legislature and so on is the fact they started that early. They recognized the importance of government and getting their hand into government and gave them an opportunity to go to the Legislature and have a good winter vacation so to speak. Get some hired help to take care of the ranch, take the family down there, they did that sometimes. They got in the habit from the cities, lawyers and business people generally, they were in occupations where they couldn't spare 40 days, when the pay was so poor over there. So that they got in the habit of staying there and getting in control of committees. They've had more influence in Legislature than their numbers warrant and they've done it partly by understanding - coming to an understanding with the influential Republicans in the towns and through this business of continuity and long service.

MJ: In an interesting - if Karpan is elected - if this comes about you would have had 4 lawyers in a row. We used to have all - not all - we had a lot of cattlemen and bankers, but cattlemen especially as governors and now all of a sudden it seems - does this mean we've become a _____ society

TA: Well it certainly is _____ society, but it's the level of competence might be beyond most of the ranchers. Now Cliff Hansen worked out fairly well as a governor actually. But he was more broad minded I thought. He even asserted one time that the way to go about the budgeting was to find out what we really want in our society and then find the money to do it. (laughter) That's not the

average approach of the ranchers. Nels Smith didn't go the ranchers any good because he got off on some tangents - he was a pretty weak governor. That is not the present Nels Smith, his grandfather, he's a very able person. The background of the average rancher is not the best training for running a more complex society such as we have. When we were more agriculture than we are now why they were a little better qualified for it. These things get pretty complex. I think that city people are going to be a little more discriminating in advancing ranchers to governorships.

(31.13, Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: Do you think there's any reason in the world why a competent woman couldn't handle the position of governor?

TA: I can't think of what it would be. We've got some capable governors in other places, we've got a woman governor in Nebraska now who's doing fairly well I guess. But we've had governor's in other places. I do think probably we'd be wise it's be a good thing to adopt the unicameral Legislature, I think. There's serious weaknesses about the way our bicameral Legislature works. But we got locked into that notion from way back. On the other hand they don't do it that way in Europe. In England they've got a bicameral alright but one house has got the control - the House of Commons.

MJ: I always thought that Malcolm Wallop would've been better in the House of Lords than he is in the Senate.

TA: He misread the people. He'd gone along with some of the more liberal legislation in Cheyenne and people got the notion that he was a preservationist and that he was a good deal more liberal in development and so on and things like that and preserving the wilderness and wildlife and things like that. He's turned out to be anti many of those things.

MJ: Well someday, someone's going to read the transcript of this or listen to the tape and they're going to say there's a couple of liberal Democrats for you. (laughter)

TA: I don't know, I think while there is a swing in favor of democracy away from Communism, all the other leading nations of the world, advanced nations, are socialistic really. We're the one holdout on that just about. There's a lot of socialism all through Europe.

MJ: In talking about all the candidates - not all the candidates, but most of the candidates who spoke - Democratic candidates for the presidency mentioned universal government supported health care.

TA: Well, that's a democratic principal. I like the Canadian system myself from what I've seen of it.

MJ: National Health Care System?

TA: That's right. I think we're going to have to come to it. And they can make some improvements in their system and certainly our system is far from perfect here. We've got to do something about the 30-40 million people who have no health insurance. We've got to do something about all the tests, we've got to do something about the malpractice business, we've to cut out or reduce the concentration on some of these putting all the tremendous amount of research and money into keeping people alive forever when they'd be better off dead. I'm not for euthanasia exactly, but I'm certainly strong for the right of people to say "I've had enough, let's end it"! Living wills as they call them and some of the associated principles of people deciding that they don't want artificial aids - classing food and water, limiting those as things that have to be given, we changed the law in the House so that a person can if he wants to cut off his - I've seen people die that way too. Couple of my good friends they decided they didn't want to be kept alive, they could keep people alive for years and years if they just feed them interveniously and give them water and food. But if their mind's gone and so on what's the point of that? If it's just the question of keeping them alive, treating them like a vegetable more or less - I think that's too much money going into that sort of thing. Most of the money's being spent on the elderly. If giving them a life that isn't worth much. We've got to take better care, concentrate more on prevention and taking care of the children.

MJ: I wanted to talk a little about the writing of history and where you think that'll go, but just back on this other topic. Just one last question. Take a wild guess Dr. Larson and tell me what you think the populations at this time towards the end of the 21st century - in Wyoming

TA: Well, that's a little speculative for me. Because for one thing I look for nuclear fusion to be controlled and that will provide unlimited energy. That will shake up the whole world. 30-40 years ago, I was told by people whose opinion I respected, that by now we would be able to take a handful of material that would provide for an automobile to run a year and so on. The amount of energy that's available if you could manage fusion as opposed to fission which we have controlled now pretty much, the hydrogen atom - enough energy in that if you could just fuse like amounts of what the sun is providing in a way. So depends on if we can solve that problem, how to control atomic energy - boy it'll shake up the whole world! Cause energy and the squabbling among nations and so on over the declining amount of energy materials - maybe by that time we'll be able to save what little oil we've got left for lubrication. We're terribly wasteful in our use of petroleum because it's so much more valuable in some petrochemicals and for lubrication and things like that. And temporarily we've got almost a surplus of natural gas, but that's not going to continue. We need to conserve some of those things. Alternatives would be controlling the sun, using more energy directly from the sun and wind energy and things like that. But population - the population alone will depend a good part about that energy problem. Water

is of course one limiting fact and there's nothing we can do about water unless we desalt the oceans and get enough energy we could pipe water back to Wyoming and irrigate some of these places, but right now water is severely limiting and it will be for the foreseeable future. But if we had unlimited energy through nuclear fusion, why all sorts of things are possible.

MJ: We could maybe stop, as some of the environmentalists are saying "stop taking out of this state, taking out" and just having the state for what you described in your last chapter. A wide open area an expanse of psychological and physical freedom.

TA: That's right and the attitude towards population. You know if we can improve, we've had a great improvement in comforts - this consumer driven society's always bothered me, growing up in the Depression and so on. There's so much waste going and so. Our opportunities to spread the wealth so to speak among the people who are so desperately poor and level it off from people who have - the billionaires - so that we double the number of billionaires in the recent ten years and things like that you know - we're going to have to have more leveling of the comforts the amenities and the indoor plumbing and all the rest of it. The level of life. It's incredible how many luxuries have become necessities in this past century. What I started to say is that people improve their standard of living, they tend to have fewer children. If we could raise the standard of living and it's the poorer people who have most of the children now. If people who want to improve their standard of living but they don't want to be responsible for educating 10 children and so on and tie themselves down, there is a tendency to hold down population. Otherwise the repopulation is spreading in the world - we're going to run into serious problems. Of course there's been a long argument about population control and the Chinese with their billion people _____ apparently girls or they're discouraging, they're taxing, they're doing all sorts of things to prevent people trying to control girl babies and so on leaving one child to the family and so on and want that to be a boy.

MJ: I've always felt - not always but for a long time now - I've felt that population was going to have world growth, national growth was going to have serious impact on us and I think a lot of our problems are caused by that. Just the needs that we have and people with too many kids, more health care during the Reagan Bush era I think the discrepancy between rich and poor grew greater as the population increased. It just seems to me that maybe we in Wyoming with the actual decrease in the population in the last 5 years or so - 5 to 10 years - are not seeing things as they really are. We're not affected quite the same way as people in some of those big cities are.

TA: Of course we're not. The changes in southern California and in Miami are just mind boggling. I have a niece who's teaching in Long Beach in Orange County actually which used to be a rich persons community but a lot of the immigrants are getting in there. 20 years ago she had a fine class, hardworking kids, all

anglos. Now she's got 5 or 6 different nationalities - Cambodians, Vietnamese, the Hispanics, the Blacks and 4 or 5 of each and it's just bedlam. Now with the pressure with all the Hispanics flooding in there. I have another friend Phi Beta Kappa who was one of my graduates here, she's teaching kindergarten because her husband's got a job out there and she's working on the side she's teaching kindergarten and she has to teach them in Spanish, because she has to become fluent in Spanish so she can - this bilingualism is unfortunate in a way because to me it is. I think it's great for anglos to be able to use Spanish in order to deal with Spanish people, but I think it's most important for the Hispanics and other people who come in to learn English as fast as possible and use that as their common language in this country. This business and it's happening in Russia now - this business of breaking up into national and ethnic groups, I think that's going backward. I'm more of a believer in assimilation if possible and maybe intermarriage is the only answer. I got the wild notion one time that one way you can solve this nationalistic problem and racial problem is to accept international laws, the United Nations given enough influence so they can specify and enforce that you cannot marry anybody of your own race. (laughter) Because I don't know how else we're gonna solve all these racial hostilities and nationalistic problems. The race problems seem to be getting worse in some parts of the world.

(Beginning Tape 2, Side A)

TA: The reason I find it difficult to feel confident at all about population projections for Wyoming is that some of the technological and scientific breakthroughs and this business of atomic fusion will open up such tremendous possibilities that can't tell what might happen. When you think of all the changes that have taken place in this one century and when you think of genetic engineering they call it - gene splicing - and inventions, breakthroughs of all kinds, they could come at any time and it could affect the population business. I have been disturbed by the working at cost purposes - we feed the starving in Africa and India and so on - and the immediate consequence is that you increase their population and there are too many people there already. So it's a vicious circle almost. I've been a Rotarian 50 years and we put a lot of money into solving polio, vaccinating people around the world. That's a little different because we're making it possible for people to have better lives - we aren't keeping people alive who otherwise would die I suppose, but polio's a little different, it cripples people so badly. It's a little different than simply feeding the starving and you feel obligated to feed the starving but it is unfortunate that the next 10 years later as a result you have that many more people starving in areas where they can't feed themselves to start with.

MJ: Isn't there an axiom that says that technological change seems to always to surpass social change. I mean our social ideas should fall in line with out technological change. Our technological demands so that we can understand how to control a little bit better.

TA: We if you could provide the technological advance and you could get them to the point where they can feed themselves - but we haven't been able to apply enough wealth to do that.

MJ: Well. Dr. Larson, if you don't mind, I'd like to talk just a little bit about your writing and where you think Wyoming history's going. First of all your writing. You know in reading and rereading this book on Wyoming that you did for W.W. Norton I sense in chapter 1 especially with your discussion of the fur trappers and in chapter 5 the energy chapter in which you get a little romantic, I think, when you talk about this rancher west of the Wind River Range, Otis what was his name - but you quote a rancher who got back to the earth and got sweaty and got dirty and got his hands dirty again and that's what it was all about to you. But it seems to me that your writing, you've got a romantic bent or a romantic streak in your writing that it seems to be may be a little frustrated by the kind of writing that you're having to do. You see what I'm saying? You were told early on by this professor that if you wanted to be in journalism maybe you should take history first, you could always get into journalism later. And I'm wondering if you didn't have a notion to write a little bit different type of material in your life - than history?

TA: Well I was influenced by the "**Royal Road To Romance**". Did you every read the "**Royal Road to Romance**"?

MJ: Hu-uh

TA: There was a chap who wrote his way around the world in the 1920's he published this book. He was an odd fellow, I discovered that he was a gay - he was gay - but I didn't realize that when he wrote the book, and that has really neither here nor there, but he was a single person at any rate and he worked his way around the world and he talks of that, and introduced a little fiction once in a while apparently. But he did this in the 20's when it was possible to do that, he worked his way around the world and was able to go into any country just about. When I got out of college that was impossible! When I was in England, the year I spent in England, I had to shown them I had enough money to take care of myself and I had to guarantee I wouldn't take any work in England. So I had to report into the police station every month to make sure that I wasn't taking work there. The whole situation changed. But there was a period there when a single person could work his way around the world and get jobs to do and write interesting stories back home about his life and so on and that's one reason why journalism appealed to me. That was the romantic side of it, but when I got to Boulder if they'd have had a freshman class in journalism - but they started out their people that declared a interest in journalism - they were given a general liberal arts advisor. I'd never had anything to do with anyone in journalism, I'd already changed my mind not to be a journalist by the end of that year so I never got into

journalism at all. But you're right, that romantic side of journalism appealed to me - you'll have to read the "**Royal Road To Romance**". (laughter)

MJ: Do you think too, that your decision to go into the writing of history or into the field of history had something to do with maybe your practical farm background?

TA: No, I'm sure when I ... right now a counselor is a tremendously important person in any high school I think. If you have a wise counselor who can steer people in a particular directions and stimulate them and say "you don't want to do this for these reasons" and so on is a terribly tough decision. Because I notice in college that the people who are motivated are the ones who really get ahead and do good work and a person gets in there - he doesn't know what he wants to do and so on, why he just lacks the motivation, is a goof off and is influenced by his peers and so on and doesn't know if the course he's taking is going to be of any relevance for him and we'd be better of people would know what they wanted to do and go ahead and do it and prepare themselves for it. Now on the other hand, they need to be motivated and it's getting more and more important to be flexible and get a general, I think, liberal arts education which will stand in good stead in whatever you happen to get into because right now so many people are finding they can't get into what they prepared themselves for. What they prepared themselves for is no longer viable and they've got to do something else.

MJ: Did you feel frustrated though when you were writing history that you had to write in a historical vein rather than a free flowing romantic vein.

TA: No. I used to try to write some humor when I was writing for the _____ Magazine in Boulder and so on. I was trying my hand at some of that. That borders on fiction, fiction I never got into fiction very much, although I sometimes have dreams and think my gosh that'd make a good story, I ought to write that up, you know.

MJ: How about poetry?

TA: Poetry never appealed to me. I used to write verse in high school but that's as far as it went - rhymes. My good friend Wilson Klough (??) when he was professor up here he used to classify poets as - there are poets and poet tasters and rhymers I guess he called them. Some people can just make rhymes others try to write poetry and don't succeed. Then there are rare poets. He had little use for the so called poetry - there are a lot of poets in the world who think they're poets who really aren't poets by his standards.

(10.42, Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: What about Wilson Klough, do you think he was?

TA: Well he was a poet, some of his poetry was well rated.

MJ: Well I guess what I'm saying is and I'm going to put you on the spot here - but I'm saying that in your Bicentennial History of Wyoming which to me is very readable, very interesting, very succinct, that you were, it seems to me FORCED into a position to where you HAD to write in a way in which you probably would have written best, rather than that writing which you did for the other book which is very detailed and very precise - I don't say that there's anything wrong with that - I'm just saying that I think they forced you into a position where you had to write the kind of thing that I think that you write best.

TA: That's right. I don't know about whether I write that way. But they specified and some of the reviews were sent that I did that better than most of the other. They picked 51 people - one for each state you see. Most of the others did not, couldn't find, or weren't able or didn't have a state that lent itself to that sort of thing as much as I did. I was able to pick up 5 or 6 themes. Where in Wyoming was different from other states. Find some unique aspect. But when I lived in Nebraska and Iowa for example, or Kansas, it's hard for me to see how they could, and South Dakota, where they could find corresponding themes.

MJ: Well you're more familiar with Wyoming history.

TA: I know but, even so, they write the history of their states and so on but they really don't break it down into themes the way I did.

MJ: Did you ever get any feedback as to how good yours was compared to some of the others?

TA: Well I have had some indirect feedback in the way it's sold. The way it's continued to sell. It's gone through gosh I don't know how many printings. It's been in softback for a long time now and they keep grinding out new printings, so probably it's one of the best sellers that was.

MJ: When you write, is there a kind of a combination of things working? You do a lot of inductive work in your historical work. I mean you go out and go to the files, go to the research material, go to the publications in the newspapers and what have you and you gather material and you work it seems to me inductively. But on the other hand, this book here, this Norton book has so much intuitive thinking in it.

TA: That's because by that time I had pretty fair knowledge of Wyoming history. Now the other, I started out by going through newspapers trying to find out what bothered people at different periods. To find out - because some things that were important in certain periods were never put down in the books that were available to me in the sources. To get a feel of the territory and state I did a lot of hard grinding work and it sort of hurt my style in a way I think. Because when you deal in a lot of the things that have been written about Wyoming, it's not well

written, the choice of words are not good and so on, you get into bad habits, you get to colloquial too on some of these things. As far as literary level is concerned, I think I wrote better in the first years out of college during the PhD years and afterward than in some of Wyoming history. Because when you're _____ practically all your sources are not well written by literary standards, why you're apt to laps into that sort of stuff too.

MJ: You almost have to read stuff that IS literary to keep that crispness or that freshness.

TA: That's right. Well at any rate, have to deal with the deck that's dealt you.

MJ: When you look at the "**History of Wyoming**" book and this Norton Bicentennial book, do you Dr. Larson look at these two books as one of your most important accomplishments, the development of Wyoming history?

TA: Oh certainly. My war history was a good book and that was a real contribution, but World War II lost interest for a lot of people by the 50's when that book came out '54 and we were in the Korean War then. There's more interest now in World War II than when that book was written.

MJ: Yeah, I didn't want to forget that book, I didn't mean to neglect that book because I know that book you're awfully proud of too, but if you could look over your whole career, how would you evaluate your work in Wyoming history? Considering the sources you had, the people you had going before you and perhaps maybe looking in the future at the people who are coming up now

TA: Well I think I focused on areas that and tried to include the important developments in the History. Now doubt put more emphasis on some things than other people would and so on but that's the way it developed as I worked with the material.

MJ: But wouldn't you - I'm going to say this and you can deny it or correct me if I'm wrong - but I think you're the first TRUE historian that Wyoming's seen, who has done substantial historical work in this State.

TA: It is true, really highly trained people were not writing Wyoming history. There were some highly trained people like Fred Nussbaum in European history and Laura White in American History, but they didn't go to work on Wyoming history. It's state history - it's never had the stand really that national history has had and one reason is that it isn't so critically evaluated. People in other states are not as well qualified to judge it and to get at a really high level you need more people working in the field because the borrow from each other and get information from each other which they can incorporate. If you had to do as I had to do - dig it out myself, you're not going to have the quality really.

MJ: But there is no so called "father of Wyoming history" or "mother of Wyoming history" is there? I mean before you time at least.

TA: _____ in a sense and she really was trained, she had no historical training, she was trained, went to the University of Iowa and was trained as a draftswoman. Got a Bachelors Degree then worked in the territorial engineer's office, Elwood Mead's office. Then got to be secretary of the Board of Trustees here at the University of Wyoming because Carey got her that job - Joseph M Carey. Then she was sort of running the University for a while because the trustees were - some of them didn't come to the annual meetings and so on - the was a rancher out here who president of the Board of Trustees and he sort of let her run the shop and so she got a lot of influence around here and got to be the librarian (not many books to deal with) and when they finally pushed her out of her job as secretary why then she became the head of the Political Economy Department. It was sort of a combination of political science and economics and what not and started writing Wyoming history. So that she had no rigorous training in historical method and she'd picture what she wanted to prove than set out to prove it. She would throw out stuff that didn't fit her needs. No she was no historian in that sense.

(21.05, Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: Do you think that was true of some of the other states too, that maybe some of the first people to try to capsulize their state's progress let's call it in those days, weren't real historians either.

TA: Oh certainly that's true.

MJ: OK I don't know if you want to talk much about this but I have always been curious - and I don't want to use this in the book - but I am curious as to how you feel about the development of that American Studies Program. What happened to it? How you developed it, what happened to it. I know that and like I say we don't have to use this, but I know that there's a problem between you and Gressley on that whole issue and I'm wondering why there is, what happened? Are you willing to talk about that at all?

TA: Sure. The William Ivinson Coe, wealthy man married two Standard Oil heiresses, that's where he got most of his wealth, got to be a multimillionaire came out, spent summers in Cody, got acquainted, he had a brother-in-law up there I guess, E. B. Robertson I guess was his name who was a Senator for one term, but at any rate, Milward Simpson befriended him and then Dr. Humphrey. The two of them went after him to get some assistance for the University of Wyoming.

MJ: Simpson and Humphrey got...

TA: The two together persuaded him to give some money to the University and he gave have the money to the Coe Library and they also hit on the idea that should get some money for academic work up here. Meanwhile Laura White and Wilson Klough around 1940 they had talked about combining American History and American Literature. A natural combination, they work well together. In the early '50's that this might be where they could use some of his money to support the American Studies along with combination majors sort of in American History and American Literature.

MJ: Was there a trend toward that sort of ...

TA: There was some trend elsewhere but not very much. These two talked to him and he was a very conservative fellow.

MJ: Coe was?

TA: Yeah. He loved the book Hayek, University of Chicago professor, wrote the Road to Serfdom and to him the Democratic party was the next thing to socialism and socialism was the road to Communism. They talked him into having some summer conferences on getting high school teachers refresher courses so that they would be better teachers of American History and Literature.

MJ: Teaching the American principles

TA: That's right and to him, and he even had bird dogs running around checking up on, and he would see that each got a copy of Hayek's book "**The Road to Serfdom**". His idea of what should be taught in American History would be his very conservative political views.

MJ: Did then the people who were going to teach in this curriculum have to be squeaky clean, dogmatic

TA: No, no, they didn't pick them, they didn't judge them, they didn't look into their record except that they were teachers in the subject and therefore could benefit from refresher courses. But what he hoped we would teach would be real conservative capitalistic ideas about the private enterprise system. No democratic ideas with a small d or a big D either one. So we were constantly under scrutiny as to our ideas and we did pass out this book and so on. But we first got in trouble with him, we made Dr. Steckle the chairman of the Department of the school of American Studies and Klough was a key figure because he'd written a book on the origins of the American Constitution. In other words he went to England and read Plato and rest of them and early philosophers, Frenchmen, to find the sources where Jefferson and these people - he looked up the books that these people who wrote the Madison, what sources they used, what their background was.

MJ: This was one of his better works too wasn't it?

TA: Yeah, forget what he called it, but at any rate this became a cornerstone and this was politically neutral you might say. He simply dealt with where their ideas came from and Coe could find objection to that. Although one time when Klough went to visit him, he had a 400 acre estate at Oyster Bay on Long Island, he asked him once "You voted for Simpson, didn't you?", a good Republican and I guess he had so Wilson was able to nod. If he hadn't why, he might have been in trouble. But we didn't do too well. We were going to have a conference, Steckle was always on the advisory committee with the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

MJ: What year was that?

TA: Oh early '50's and a fellow named Smith who was head of English and I and Klough and Reikard and Steckle and so Steckle was running the program, he was Director. He first called a conference on American Studies. Gonna pay some professors around the country, leaders up here at the Science Camp and after several people had been invited, Coe asked for the list of the people. A couple of them had been investigated by the Dyes Committee. It was a time when we were involved in the early phases of the cold war and a number of the professors were suspect.

(30.09, Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: Martin Dye, wasn't he a Senator from Tennessee or Kentucky or somewhere

TA: I forget where he was from, he was trying to find - there were some Communists and some former Communists in the Education course. Sidney Hoak (sp??) was one of the most prominent who had been a Communist, quite a number of intellectuals got into Communism when things were so terrible at that time. At any rate, by this time people, what you would ordinarily call just plain liberal were under suspicion so that when they sent in the list Coe said you can't have him, you can't have him, Steckle had to cancel the summer conference because Coe wasn't going to have these two people on it. That got us off to a bad start. So he was always a little suspicious. Then Steckle didn't like some of the things that were going anyway I guess, but he got a chance to get a Fullbright Fellowship to Germany and he wanted to do some research over there on the colonial history that he was involved in, American Colonial History was his specialty and he asked for a leave of absence. President Humphrey told him "If you go, you're through with American Studies, you can't have that job back". So he went so then we had a fellow named Robert Walker, we brought him in, and we made him acting director of the program. He was having a hard time with Coe and Humphrey too. Then Humphrey didn't like him, so finally Humphrey decided he had to fire him. Then we had to find a new director. Coe or Humphrey or

somebody had got next to somebody down in Texas. There was a Harding College - Coe had given money to Stanford and Yale and Wyoming and Harding College. Harding College was the only one that took him at face value did exactly what he wanted - indoctrinate them into the free enterprise system, no socialistic ideas, no consideration to anything but right-wing Republicanism, but the others managed to struggle along. And Humphrey had found someone down in Texas who was just what Coe wanted and when the department got together and talked it over and so on, they just couldn't bring themselves to hire this fellow, then Humphrey said either I had to take the job as director, even though it wasn't in my line, this combination of American History and so I took it on a temporary basis, I thought, rather than see the money go up in smoke or see the whole thing break up. You know this money thing, you can't give up all this money that was coming in for Fellowships and scholarships you know, so I got into something I probably shouldn't got into because it took me away from what I was more interest in, so I was just sort of the director and a stopgap because the Department insisted I had to do it.

MJ: Why did Humphrey want you to do it?

TA: Well because, at that time, I published my War Years and I was in good standing with the trustees, they'd given me a big dinner and so on and he had confidence in me and one thing and another. I'd gone and had a Fellowship to Columbia to study their program in general education, but any rate, he thought I had enough standing apparently to bring it off and sort of be the supervisor of things. So I got stuck in that job and thought afterwards that I really didn't want to do it. But then finally I found a way out and the president in person gave me the chair of American Studies after Klough retired see. That way I was finally was able to get out of an activity that I probably shouldn't have been in in the first place. At that time, Gressley had been developing his collecting thing, spending huge sums, collecting all over the place, spending his money on collecting and giving big tax writeoffs for people who would send their stuff freight collect you know. His idea of collecting was to collect everything that no one else wanted. He said day it will be - or that no one else was collecting so he was piling it up in warehouses you know and not spending any money to make it available for people and so on. Because his good friend Jim Rance, he and Rance had been together in the library up here when Rance was director of the library and Gressley was the - he just came here with a Master's and was learning the business of running an archives collection. He'd worked a couple of years with Agnes Wright Spring in Denver, and both of those wrote their Doctorate dissertations on company time so to speak while they were together on the library. But at any rate, Rance left then to go out to British Columbia and Humphrey brought him back because he'd done a good job building the library, brought him back and made him Vice President of Academic Affairs. So he had enough influence, so he could get things for Gressley with Carlson. And as I say they were buddies, so he got - when I left the directorship of American Studies, what does Rance do and Carlson, but to make Gressley Director of American Studies.

MJ: What year was that?

TA: Oh about maybe about '68 or so. And he had no interest in American Studies and this program. He just wanted to get at the money. And that's what they had in mind. So what he did then was just take a year or two to get it done, but he transferred all the Fellowship money and even part of the money that had gone into the chair, he dropped it, after I retired he dropped it, didn't fill it, the chair - took that money and took all the money going to Fellowships and put it into his program running the archives. Coe was dead by this time, so it just wrecked the American Studies program by transferring all the money to Gressley, making him director who wasn't interested in it.

MJ: So the program was defunct then?

TA: Well for all intents and purposes it was. It was a program that didn't have any financial support that amounted to anything, except for one person, Herb Dietrick had taken the place of Walker later on. And Gressley, as I say, he just took over that program and took the money for his operation. But there were a number of other things why I couldn't get along with Gressley. He did a lot of things that you would hardly believe. One time for example, I had a student, Nenniman (sp??) did a doctorate on O'Mahoney's fight against Roosevelt on the Supreme Court _____ business. And in the O'Mahoney collection there was some material on that business and Nenniman had seen it, but when he comes down to final wrapping and he desperately needed that, he couldn't find that material and he thought Gressley might have it somewhere and he asked him and "no, no" and finally when Esther Kelley was working up there, when Gressley was out of town one time, why Ninniman and Esther Kelley went and they found that on Gressley's desk. He was writing an article on it, he was going to wreck this guys dissertation, by keeping this material for himself and not telling him he had it. That sort of stunk. That was only one of a bunch of stunts so we just broke entirely with Gressley.

MJ: So then

TA: Later on, after we changed the dean and the Vice President of Academic Affairs, they got some of that money back from Gressley's operation and we revived the American Studies program but they haven't filled the chair.

MJ: How do you feel about all this stuff that he collected though?

TA: Well some of it's good stuff, but he provided very little service for, and one grievance was that we weren't using his collection more than we were. Well in my case, Women's Rights, I got off on to Women's Rights stuff and that led me to libraries all over the country. People for one reason or another choose their own topics, they're not going to choose just because he has something on it you

know. It bothered him the fact that so very few people were using his collection for one thing. But one reason they weren't using his collection was he lost stuff, and it wasn't made available and only very people did use those collections. Costs 4 or 5 time as much to organize and make useable and provide the services for something as it does to collect. It's relatively easy to say we'll pay the freight if you send your collection here.

MJ: Had there been somebody else in charge of that aspect of the programs, making this whole area more accessible - all these boxes, this whole archival collection - had there been somebody else in charge of that do you think things would have come off a little bit better?

TA: Oh undoubtedly!

MJ: So it's not the fact that Gressley wasn't a good of indefatigable type of collector.

TA: Oh he was too voracious really. I mean he collected everything. He decided for example - columnists - he decided he was going to collect columnists, so he'd just get a list and have 8 or 10 different letterheads and make it appear that this was a center for this and a center for that and each new field he was collecting in he'd have a special letterhead and he'd send out these letters by the thousands and tell people, invite them to send their stuff freight collect and he would evaluate - it was contrary to archival principals to do your own evaluating - but there was a period there where people were giving unjustified evaluations for their stuff too so they'd send it in too, a lot of them sent their stuff in. It was getting out of hand literally, collecting so darn much stuff and not making it properly available. Not open on weekends, not open during the noon hour, because he was just concentrating all that Coe money in collecting, because it takes money to pay freight and buy storage for all this. He would say "I don't know what's worth anything, but 50 years from now some of it will be". Well that's true, but no collector in the country had such complete free hand as he had to decide for himself what he's going to collect.

MJ: Well where did he get into trouble then, the way you see it?

TA: Well for one thing, he was in some trouble with the Internal Revenue Service about excessive valuation, had to cut back some of that. But it was principally a matter of the great amount of money he was taking, taking the Coe money and using this money for something that it wasn't originally designed for. And then like this business wrecking or threatening to wreck the career of this kid and he was constantly fighting with - for a while originally his program was under the librarian - and at least two librarians quit and went elsewhere and 3 or 4 of his assistants quit because they couldn't get along with him. Pete Long, great Civil War historian, he brought him in here as a publicist to publicize his stuff and he wanted to do a little work on his Civil War stuff and he wanted to teach a course in Civil War and so on. Apparently Gressley drove him so hard on this other

stuff that his widow said that Gressley killed him because of the differences they had. But he would do when he was part of the library, through his influence with the grants over in Old Main, he would get all the travel money and so on and the librarian wouldn't get any money and he was traveling more and more.

(Beginning of Tape 2, Side B)

MJ: Do you think that he got his just due Dr. Larson?

TA: Well yes, and then he shredded - when he left his job he shredded a lot of his papers, dealings with different people so we don't know, he didn't keep track what the terms were for what stuff he collected was and the new administrator has to try to get in touch with all these donors and find what promises were made to them and so on, because stuff was shredded when he left.

MJ: I thought they had kept boxes and boxes of his correspondence. But he shredded stuff, I didn't know that.

TA: Oh he shredded a lot of stuff. Librarian saw him shredding it in the library in the back part of the library when he came in.

MJ: I know it may be hard for you because you were close to the American Studies program to be objective about this, but what do you think his place will be in the history of the University for example? Or in the history of the development of history in Wyoming?

TA: Well I don't know for sure. If all the facts are known about his activities, why he could probably wind up in jail as far as that goes. He was just very high handed in everything he did and very two faced in everything that he did.

MJ: He did make some friends though, didn't he?

TA: He certainly made friends among the donors. He's got powerful friends among the donors and these people were in a way obligated to him because they got excessive valuations and tax writeoffs for what they gave him.

MJ: Do you think he'll every make a comeback? Do you think the present administration is bound and determined to keep him subdued.

TA: They'd like to fire him, but they're just letting him sit and do nothing and write. He taught, they had him teach one general course this past term. Then he wanted to do a seminar, but nobody signed up for his seminar, so he's not teaching anything. The one student and one student who did go to talk to him about it, Gressley told him apparently, so the student said, told him he wasn't ready to give the course yet. So they're just keeping him on a high salary and his salary went up and up to about \$75,000, he even concealed some of the money that

was going to him that didn't show up in the books. He got in the inside track with Elliot Hayes who was in charge of the finances - they discovered afterwards he criticized from outside inspectors because he bought 16 or 17 of Hayes' daughters pictures and added to his collection, which outside inspectors said this is not proper. Things like that, he's just a monomaniac it's just incredible the sort of things that he would do.

MJ: As a historian do you see that it would have been possible for an administrator like a president to gain control of the situation and say now look Gressley, we know you're good in this area and you're going to be allowed to do this collecting, but with these kinds of restrictions. Do you think it would have been possible.

TA: Well it would have been possible I suppose, but after Rance left, Rance fell out with Carlson and he got fired. That of course lost him his support over at Old Main. So a number of things, a good president came in who left after 3 years, I forget his name ...

MJ: Jennings

TA: Jennings, he was going to trim down the things he was doing, rationalize it and provide more service and so on. He was about to get that done but he left and that meant it had to be passed on. Vehl I guess it was, he tried to continue some of those things. But this board was split, because some of the board members were on good terms with Gressley. Gressley, another thing he did, he would go over the head of the president and normally you have to go through channels with these things so he would just get on the phone and talk to these trustees and tell them what all he was being mistreated by the president and so on. That sort of thing enters into what the president ...

MJ: That started with the Vehl administration?

TA: Yeah, and even with Jennings, Jennings was having some trouble because some of these people, like Hanson probably or certainly another wealthy man who had given money to the operation, can't think of his name ...

MJ: Watt?

TA: Yeah, Joe Watt, some of these people and I don't know whether Hathaway got into it or not, but at any rate a number of these people would get on the board to protect Gressley from some of these things and Gressley would always appeal to them over their heads and so on. In other cases he would appeal to other people who would receive sizeable tax evaluations

MJ: Now Roark put a stop to everything, right?

TA: Well Roark finally was able to - Roark replaced Vehl - well Roark finally did finalize it, pulled him out of there and had an acting director a fellow from the English department and then the University attorney, sort of a trouble shooter, these two in turn took over and run the operation.

MJ: Baker you mentioned in your article in the Annals and then there's a Wilstead.

TA: Well Weilstead he's the expert on the classifying. He doesn't want to administer the whole operation. He was doing what Gressley was not doing. Gressley had nothing to do with the National Archival Organization. They have a big operation nationally.

MJ: The American Archival, the AAA or something

TA: Something, archives organization. In fact we had a couple of people from them come in. President of that outfit and somebody else, they came in and evaluated his operation and so on. Their evaluations and very harsh criticisms of the way he operated and so on. So all this led up finally to the decision to pull him out of there.

MJ: Now if you would have been president, if you would have had the power to hire and fire and make decisions, what would you have done at the appropriate time?

TA: Well I think I would have had an advisory group to decide to have a mission statement for example, of just what are they going to collect. Are you going to try to collect everything in the world, everything that nobody else is collecting like Gressley said that was his, and are you going to shade this evaluating business and give people to do not what you're not supposed to do, that is put a price value on that and run it through. The first time they cracked down on this was nationally when Nixon tried to get a \$2 million evaluation placed on government documents that he gave. They really belonged to the government not to him, but he was going to give a bunch of his stuff and get an evaluation of \$2 million from Internal Revenue Service. Gressley was in with a lot of movie stuff too. They've got a Jack Oakey room up there, a bunch of his shoes, and pipes and pictures of Jack Oakey the movie star. And he's got another room set up by another second rate movie - forget his name - so that there's a limit on what a state like Wyoming, we're running into trouble with that now. We're stuck with all this stuff and now that's one of the things that the Legislature will cut back on inevitably, because in order to get this stuff all organized and handled the way it should be handled and made available takes a pretty good size staff to run a big building like that. And the building is going up now, the contracts are all let, but the second year biennium, they're not going to have, it's going to drag out processing that stuff. But Wielsted, you asked about him, he had a good archive job. He was archives for the Salvation Army. I don't know how big a collection they have back in New York. They hired him to handle that processing part. That's his _____. He doesn't want to run the public relations and all the rest. That makes a

good team. This fellow we got in, Mike Devine, from Illinois, he had a big operation there, part of it archival, part of it running 50 state parks and all sorts of things like that.

(11.48, Tape 2, Side B)

MJ: What's happened to the American Studies Program?

TA: The American Studies Program has been revived, can't think of the fellow who's taking it over. They've got the Cooper Mansion they're headquartered over there.

MJ: Sandean isn't it?

TA: Yeah he's it. The original American Studies was conceived here and in some places is English. With them it was American History and American Literature, logical combination. But Minnesota they had a program their PhD in American Studies worked in six different departments. They get into pop culture quite a bit and a lot of things that some people don't go in for. They get into music, and film and modern film stuff and so on. So American Studies has had difficulties in the country, although there is an American Studies association and so on. Because Literature people and English Departments of course they have to hire a lot of people, and history people hire a lot of people and therefore you get a combination - then the history and the english people are more apt to pick people to teach in their departments who have more depth in one aspect - in American History it would be stronger in American History or English Department would hire people who would be stronger in American Literature. So that unless you have American Studies department set up separate

MJ: Tends to sway back and forth?

TA: Well it's hard to place an American Studies PhD - that's the point. No place for them to go, unless the go into the movies or write for the movies or get into

MJ: Is that the way you would have wanted to see it go?

TA: No. It was too broad for me the way it was and especially with the Coe connection, I never felt comfortable with that. I've made one transition getting into Wyoming History and you move around too much, unless you're a very unusual gifted person, you're just going to get stranded.

MJ: Is that program held in high repute now?

TA: I'm afraid it isn't held in too high repute here. But nevertheless a number of people go into it because they are interested in going into some of these other things.

MJ: But you're glad to see it survive?

TA: Yes, I think so. Yes that's what it was endowed for whether we've got the money and it's earmarked for that program and there was some fancy footwork when they transferred that money away, when they closed out the funding for it and took the Coe money for it and gave it to the archives. If Coe had been alive, I don't know whether he would approve of that, but he was dead by that time.

MJ: Is there enough Coe money in it now to keep it going?

TA: Yes, oh yeah. Because half the money at least was Coe money. It was transferred to help the American Studies program.

MJ: Was Wyoming History woven into that curriculum, the American Studies Curriculum?

TA: No.

MJ: It was separate from it. Well that's really interesting.

TA: I had a joint responsibility. I was director of American Studies and head of this History Department at the same time for 8 or 9 or 10 years.

MJ: That's when I came in.

TA: Yeah. No I didn't want all that administrative activity and so on. It held me back on my own research and writing and so on.

MJ: Would you have, Dr. Larson would you have looking back on it now, would rather not have had all the administrative responsibility you had?

TA: I damn near was, the president almost made me I discovered after all asked me to be Dean one time of the college, when they brought in a fellow named _____, he didn't stay long. I'm glad he didn't ask me because they have to have so much - people that become deans, they really give up their scholarly activity - they have to and become administrators which they may or may not be skilled for and this business of sitting behind a desk quite a bit and dealing with department heads and all that stuff and having people come in and complaining about the way they're being treated and all that, I don't care for that. And all the paper to be distributed and to be collected and all this is just not what I was trained to do.

MJ: But you did well at it, didn't you?

TA: I don't think I was a particularly good administrator. I got along well with my people.

MJ: Isn't that what it takes?

TA: Well that's part of it, but maybe I wasn't hard enough on some of them and I'm a little too softhearted. It's hard for me to fire somebody for example. And if you're going to build a department sometimes you just have to be pretty ruthless. I'm not _____ tenured and that sort of thing. I saw getting old people, why I just see them as good teachers and let them go ahead and do that, but as this University goes on it's publish or perish and that sort of stuff.

MJ: Do you think that history is too close, you mentioned in your annals article that it's mixed up now with journalism, do you think that history too close to journalism? Do you think it should be kept as a separate entity and maybe we shouldn't even talk about evaluating things that occur as early as 50 years ago.

TA: Oh no, they're getting close to the present. You've got to have people keep working on these things. That's what the medievalists and the English history people and so on did, but they've been working on it for hundreds of years so certain ideas get to be accepted and there isn't much revision there. But the closer you get to the present the more revisionism you get, the more people rewrite stuff and take entirely different interpretations. It gets more controversial that way.

MJ: Can you see what's going to happen to the writing of history down the line? Do you have premonitions about what might happen?

TA: Well it certainly gets mixed more and more with journalism. You have books coming out on Desert Storm and a number of things, it doesn't take long before the interpretations get questioned. The dealings with Russia. The new books out about Gorbachev (sp??) and about the collapse of Communism and so on, just a year after it happened books were out. And I'm amazed how well they do what they do. It's current history you might say, but there's a place for that. They'll be revised of course.

(20.46, Tape 2, Side B)

MJ: There's no substitute for time, is that what you're saying?

TA: Actually we get too many books published maybe and so on. But if you get a popular subject and publishers want to get out something to draw some of these things together and make better than what you've read in the papers, there's certainly a place for that. And yet the first bunch of books that come out on the collapse of Communism for example ten years from now those will be revised, I mean they'll show that this wasn't quite accurate or this information has been

found since and so on. The farther back you go why the more things that have been accepted, almost beyond question.

MJ: You know since I've been involved in this oral history project, I wonder where I've been in the last 20 years in the study of history, because it seems when talking to people like you I'm getting first hand what I used to consider, I don't know, I look at these books you have on your shelves, those were all written by people and they in turn got their ideas, those footnotes, those annotated bibliographies, relate to other people. All the things that we see in here these academic works, papers, books all relate to people. And I think to myself why didn't I get a start talking to people like you a lot earlier. It would have been a great help to me to understand and little bit more holographically or three dimensionally, it would have helped me understand a little bit more about human nature and about life and about Wyoming. I kick myself for thinking that history was nothing but sitting in my own little ivory tower with a bunch papers that I'd collected from the Zerox machine from the library, whatever, you know what I'm saying?

TA: Yeah. But there are so many sources now and stuff available and more government studies and more things going on in Cheyenne throughout the various departments and studies so it gets harder and harder to write history of Wyoming than it was when I started writing it.

MJ: You think so?

TA: Oh sure, that's the reason there are going to be revisions.

MJ: I think you had your own special problems as you've outlined.

TA: Course I did. Didn't have so much backup for some of the things that I found and so on. But I tried to get into the government records as far as they were kept at that time.

MJ: You see I think you used your institution a lot in history. Even when I read the big thick volume, I see insights coming out of you based on what you read. And maybe that was due to your upbringing on the farm in Nebraska and maybe it was due to your graduate studies and maybe it just was training over the years. I don't know where it comes from, but I know that you have insights. I think that after having interviewed the people that I have interviewed, I think that I have neglected sort of the underside of history. You know what I'm saying? There are documents that are pretty clean and statistics are fairly clean I guess, you can use statistics any way you want to, but I'm getting some stuff now that gives me a lot more information on motivations that somehow or other gets deleted or subtracted from. I'm not making myself too clear.

TA: I understand what you're saying. I've run into the same problems, I've had to revise some of the things that I've used that I even wrote in this. Didn't get in

adequately to the records, records in Congress. I talk about some of these Congressmen and Senators and what they did and so on so that some of that is not as thorough as it should be, because there haven't monographs based on them and I wasn't in any position to give it all the time on each of these subjects you know. That's the reason why I have to generalize about the way it seems to me. Maybe depend too much on newspaper stories about what they did and so on instead of getting into their files. That's what some of those things are down to, but it's a limit as to what the way this world goes, maybe we're pouring a lot of time to some _____ history subject that we probably don't need to know. I think that right now there's such an explosion of information and so much of it's stacked up by computer and on tapes and so on and information about every place in the known world, that we're just flooded with source material and it makes it really difficult to really do a top job except on a very narrow subject.

MJ: Well you had that same problem when you went through newspapers, you had a tremendous amount. Do you think that was a weakness of your writing, is that what you're saying?

TA: I had to do that I figured to find out what bothered the people in particular periods of time because there were subjects that I had no other way. They hadn't been written up or anything so they'd escape me. This way I was able to get sort of an overview of the thing alright without digging. There's two new books on the Union Pacific for example. Morie Klien, I just went through those, it's laborious because each has 600 pages in it and there's a lot of stuff in there that they sat on their records. So that everything that's been written on the Union Pacific is pretty flimsy, because they didn't have the inside story from the railroads point of view you know. But he brings out a lot of that, he talks about a lot of individuals, their relations with other railroads, he brings in the things that you wouldn't even dream of existed.

MJ: Well if you could do it over again, would you still depend on the papers a lot?

TA: I might have to go at some of that that way too, I don't know, certainly I would have many more monographs and many more studies and a lot more government records. More of the records are being kept now in Cheyenne. In those days Governors would take their papers with them or destroy them you know, so there wasn't much to deal with. That's where I had an advantage with some historian out in California writes the San Francisco Chronicle I guess or whatever the principle paper - he had the nerve to write (he's dead now) he said "this is probably the best state history ever written". Well I think looking back on it, I had a simpler story to tell in a way, not nearly so many people, not nearly so many things happened. You take a state like California with all the details you have to get into and the longer history it's easy for me to put in one book the length of this size the principle themes in Wyoming history.

MJ: You know I can draw an interesting analogy I think interesting between that and living in a town like Cheyenne, Wyoming. I don't have to take a subway to go clear across town to get to a source to get to my job. I've got a little bit time to go to the library, if I want to go to the office, it's a 10 minute hop. If I want to go to the grocery store, it's a 5 minute hop, I don't have to battle traffic. I feel a lot like you do that I'm dealing in a lot smaller pond in a way, you know and it's easier. It may have it's disadvantages too. If you could go back though, would you, knowing what you know now, attack everything the same way, go to the newspapers, or would you go more to the heads of State, the head of government.

(29.45, Tape 2, Side B)

TA: Well I know there's been so much more written about the history of Wyoming, the different aspects of it. But I could probably avoid going to the papers except for one thing you're involved reading film and the film is pretty bad for some of these papers too and it's hard on the eyes and all that I wouldn't do as much of that as I had to do at that time cause more articles have been written. Lot more articles have been written about specialized in Wyoming history and so on, I've written some of them myself.

MJ: Well I think we're about done. Subjects you mentioned you like to see explored you mentioned in your Annals article, this last issue of the Annals you mentioned minerals, water, relationship to Denver.

TA: Well that gets into that outside influence. I think there is room for - we have been locked to these cities outside of Wyoming. We're locked to Salt Lake City, and Rapid City and Billings and so on. How this affects different parts of the state. There's a story there that hasn't been developed.

MJ: Alright your a historian as a historian today, you're 21 years old, what would you get into?

TA: I probably wouldn't get into state history at all. For one thing it locks you out as far as jobs are concerned. I had to think about that rather carefully because after a few years in there it became obvious that the more I fit myself for that the better expert I became on Wyoming history, no one will ever hire me out in some other state. Because I have nothing I can transfer.

MJ: Are you saying you regret ...

TA: No I don't because it's worked out very well for me. But now we hire one person after another here to pick up with Wyoming history when I was getting ready to retire and every one of them wound up sliding Wyoming for that reason. They become environmentalists or they became Indian history, that was what they were going to become expert at. We've got a chap now, Roberts who's done

quite a bit on Wyoming history and he'll be locked in the way I am, probably he will be, but he's satisfied doing that. There's a good job up here and if he's happy here he'll be appreciated and they've been appreciated what I've done, probably I would have prospered and succeeded here better than anywhere else.

MJ: Do you think the people of Wyoming appreciate Wyoming history?

TA: Well a lot of them do, yeah.

MJ: Do a lot of them claim that your class was their most interesting class?

TA: Well I don't know, I think I made it interesting to a lot of them alright.

MJ: Well I think I'm talking to the person who knows more about Wyoming history than any living human being and I'm happy to say that and I'm proud to say that. Not to say that there might not be somebody in works or the wings like Phil Roberts who will develop Wyoming history a little further, take it a little further down the road, but

TA: He certainly has that opportunity because for one thing when I started out for many years, we taught twice as many hours and many more students, bigger classes.

MJ: How many hours did you have to teach?

TA: 12 for a while and then cut back to 9 then back to 6 when I had all these administrative chores. But now 6 is the standard, teaching two courses. I wanted to start out with 4 preparations, can't do a first class job of teaching and you certainly can't find much time except weekends. I had to work nights and weekends in order to _____ my family as you do in yours probably to get some of these other things done. But you get driven so that a person now, once he gets organized and going, why he's going to have more time and more recognition for research and writing.

MJ: You say in your book the Bicentennial history you taught something like ...

TA: Over 16,000 students I did yeah.

MJ: Yeah, what do you think about that?

TA: It's too darn many. I sometimes said that I probably didn't give them any more than someone that taught 1/4 as much because he gave each one more and had more individual contact with students and could spend more time with his students.

MJ: Do you every get any feedback from these people, do they every come back and tell you what they thought about the course?

TA: Well yeah. Some of them do. You've got to take that with a grain of salt.

MJ: Finally here, looking at your career in the University system and in the Legislature and as a Lobbyist for AARP, what do you think your most important work is? Or is it your family, what do you think your legacy is?

TA: Well it would have to be in the field of Wyoming history and in teaching and that ties in with the writing because the writing helped with my teaching and so on. No I think it's in the dissemination of the knowledge about Wyoming history and getting people interested in that and respecting their history and trying to get them to be a little more critical, to ask questions and to not just accept what a book says about something or other, that's where Ebert (??) got into trouble really in the long run. She put out as gospel and teach to kids at their mother's knees and the kids grow up only that. They cling to those myths because they've know them so long and I can't believe that their not true.

MJ: You're what religion

TA: Well people don't talk about their religion or too much about their politics, but I'm like Wilson Klough, I'm an agnostic. And I think I have been ever since I was 18 years old. I think frankly that most of the people in this country are agnostics, but their wives have religious connections or something and they give it lip service. Every president has to pretend to be religious, but I suspect most of them are agnostics.

MJ: What were you raised?

TA: I got suspicious when my father sent us to church, I was brought up in a Fundamentalist Swedish Christian Church. It's the Swedish Mission Church. They have a little college in North Park in Chicago. There was one little church here.

MJ: Over in west Laramie

TA: Well I don't know whether. It was over here at 6th and Garfield I think. It's Swedish Covenant Church. It is a fundamentalist offshoot of the state church in Sweden is the Lutheran, the Swedish Lutheran.

MJ: Was your dad a true believer?

TA: No he didn't go to church very often, but he'd send us to church. So I went through, bible classes for kids, but to many things going on in the world I couldn't accept, so much _____ and so much.

MJ: Well you've got let's say another 20 years

TA: Oh no, no, no. For a person 82 I'm given 6 years as probably that is.

MJ: You're healthy now aren't you?

TA: Well pretty healthy, but my lungs have never been in good shape, that's one reason I went West to college, I've chronic bronchitis and it handicapped me in various ways. I never publicized it, but it certainly has handicapped me in various. It's a possibility that I could get emphysema or other lung problems.

MJ: How old was your dad when he died?

TA: He was only 70 or so.

MJ: So you have good genes from your mother's side at least.

TA: Well my mother died of influenza. I didn't expect to live beyond my 70's and so on because my mother died at age of 39 of influenza, but that didn't pay attention to health, some of the strongest of that Spanish Flu, 1918. Just killed more people than the war killed and it went into pneumonia and they didn't have anything to know pneumonia in those days. Now pneumonia is not the killer it was because some people really died of pneumonia because the flu really went into pneumonia. But that's before they had penicillin and antibiotics.

MJ: Have you gotten into your genealogy much Dr. Larson, at all?

TA: Not very much, no I haven't

MJ: That sort of thing doesn't interest you?

TA: No, I'm not interest in that. My ancestors were Swedish pheasants pretty much, land was pretty limited in Sweden for example and they were poor people. My father dropped out of school and came over here, and my mother the same way, she worked as a maid in Omaha and then my father who was a renter, he acquired land and prospered then lost everything he had in the great depression because he bought too much land. He retired at the age of 45 and had a couple of farms he was going to raise and he had fed cattle and he was going to supervise his renters or sharecroppers on this land and run the cattle feeding operation, but he was foolish to buy too much land because they told in World War II that land was limited and population was growing, economists all said land was the best investment to be made. Well that certainly proved false in World War II. Everybody mortgaged their land and everybody lost 3/4 of them lost their farms.

MJ: What was that joke you told me, it was after Ned Frost's funeral we were talking and on the way home you were telling us the story about the Swedish people when they first came over what they - about the black people what was it.

TA: That was a story that I picked up out here. It's a story about a Swede here in town, some of them came working timber and so on, he came to Laramie. There was a black man working in one of the timber camps up here and when one of the Swedes that he was talking to was having a little fun with him or somebody was, when he asked about this black man, he was told that's working in the timber would do for you. (laughter) He didn't want to work in the timber. One story I ran into back in Nebraska was they didn't have skunks in Sweden, so one of the things they did with a new Swede from the old country came out to work as a hired hand and so on, they's send him to catching that cat, catching him you know. (laughter)

MJ: This has been great Dr. Larson, I've enjoyed it.

TA: I don't know whether you've got that much that you can use in your book.

MJ: I think so.